

Transcript of Interview Robert Curvin, George Hampton by Toni Griffith

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SPEAKERS

Robert Curvin, Toni L Griffith, Harvard University, George Hampton, Cameraman, Unknown male

Robert Curvin 00:14

(Unintelligible intro conversation)

Toni L Griffith, Harvard University 01:24

And I'll just kind of give you guys a little bit of an overview of what we're looking at and what we'd like to cover and then it's pretty informal. I mean, I just think we'd like to get each of your different perspectives, I might like to ask you each take kind of two minutes talking about your background and your relationship with Newark and your work your work in Newark And then you know, the title of the class is called, "There goes the neighborhood perceptions of realities of neighborhoods and how they change". And I thought, given how I've taught the course now, three semesters, oh, really usually. So maybe you can just start by telling us on camera, your name and your title, your role and a little bit about your professional sort of background as relates to Newark. Okay.

Robert Curvin 02:18

My name is Bob Curvin. And I was born in Newark, actually one of the few people around that you'll find that was actually born here. But I grew up in next door in the Silver Lake section of Belleville, which is contiguous to the north ward of Newark. And, uh, but I've spent most of my adult life actually here in the city. When I came back from the military in the late 50s, my family had moved back to Newark. And I've been here ever since. During the 60s, I was one of the founders and leaders of the local civil rights movement. I was the chairman, the first chairman of North CORE, Newark-Essex CORE, here in the city. I worked in the public welfare system in the city as a caseworker. I went to school here in Newark, I'm a graduate of Rutgers Newark. I later was a adjunct member of the faculty actually, during the time of the when the students took over this building, in protest about admissions policies here. I went back to graduate school and did a PhD in Political Science at Princeton, wrote my thesis on Newark politics. Taught at City University in New York, spent six years on the editorial board of the New York Times. Then went back to academia was the dean of the graduate school at the New School for Social Research. Then went to the Ford Foundation where I ran the worldwide urban poverty program,

distributing about \$50 million a year in grants at the time. And then left Ford and ran a small family foundation in New York for a few years. At present, I'm actually in the middle of writing a narrative about my experiences in the city and the city in general. So I'm thinking about many of these issues of development and change, almost hourly. I should actually be doing it minute by minute but uh,

Toni L Griffith, Harvard University 04:54

Right, we'll get you a copy of this tape, if it might jar any other thoughts. Yeah, we'd be happy to do that. Before we sat down, you actually mentioned that one of the things that you like to do, or that you would sort of communicate to the students, if they were here, some features about Newark, that are maybe oftentimes underlooked, or undervalued, as a way of starting this conversation off, would you like to start with that?

Robert Curvin 05:20

Well, yeah, I mean, some of the points are very obvious, almost powerfully obvious. And some I think are not. But I, I would start by saying that Newark is a very small city, in terms of its size, and its geography. And that even though it's about 23 square miles, there are only about, I think, 17 of those square miles that are actually habitable in the city.

Toni L Griffith, Harvard University 05:52

And that's because of?

Robert Curvin 05:54

Well, it, there are lots of reasons, historical reasons for it. One is that Newark never acquired adjacent communities, as was true in Philadelphia, and Dallas and Baltimore, so that there's virtually no sizable suburb in the city, which means that the impact of poverty is, is even more pronounced in a city where you don't have a larger span of territory where you have larger middle class homes and so on. Also, it has a lot as a very, the size of it has a very significant impact on the potential of a civic leadership, class, and leadership. And so, in fact, I would dare say that the majority of the civic leaders of Newark do not live in the city. And to some extent, you know, that's not a normative judgment about you know, where people live, because I think we're really a regional community. But the reality is, is that there are not a lot of options within the city for people to move along, economically and class wise, as people generally do in American society. And there's a lot more to say about that. But we'll leave that for another time. The other point I would make is that Newark, again, related to size in some way, but Newark is politically a, a relatively weak city. But it's, it suffers in the context of the nature of decision making about any urban issue. And that's I guess, a complicated way of saying that the fragmentation of the political system has a very heavy impact on decision making, social progress, development, and so on. I mean, just to take for an example, Mount Laurel, one of my favorite topics, Mount Laurel, in a sense says that the isolation of the poor, in communities and not giving them an economic chance to live in neighborhoods throughout the state is unconstitutional. But once the once the court made that decision, it then becomes subject to a whole dynamic that includes the legislature, the suburbs, the communities, the local government, and you end up having a very complicated situation, where in fact, in the final analysis, it to some degree, it's even in the interest of the of the city, not to support the implementation of the policy because they end up getting benefits and money in order to build to build affordable housing. So and I can take you through almost every single major issue that affects the city's

development, and show that in many ways through the complications of decision making, including federal, state, county, local, whatnot, complicate matters. And then the other point, which again, is the most obvious point of all, is that poverty has is a constant. It's a major constant in in the city of Newark, and that there has not yet been a governmental policy to really confront poverty in a very effective and serious way. And I'm not suggesting that I have to The answer to that, but the reality is, is that for many, many years in the city's history, going back to the 50s, when the population really began to change, and the demographics and the economics began to change, there was much more denial than truth telling, in really addressing the issue of the changing population. In fact, much of the development policy was, I think, designed to avoid confronting the reality that poverty actually brought to this urban community. So those are three things that I would start with that I think are really very, very important in understanding.

Toni L Griffith, Harvard University 10:47

Yeah, I think those are right on and particularly relevant for the area that the class is going to be examining, which is really embedded in the Central Ward. And you can certainly see how all of those issues have played themselves out over the last 40 years or so. The students just recently recently watched Henry Hampton's War on Poverty which sort of lands us squarely in the middle of the 1960s. And it was a very interesting experiment, if you will call it of federal government decision makers, making a beeline to local community based decision makers in the US. So it has all of these sort of elements of the political context, as you talk about, and the relationships or non relationships between the federal government, the local government, and its residents and citizens, and civic leadership, development and effectiveness. I wonder if maybe in some of the research you're doing for your writing your book, and writings that you've done in the past, if maybe you can look a little bit retrospectively at that time and that experiment, and talk a little bit about ways in which you think it had a positive impact on that community? Have there been things that have grown out of that process that are still working, or we should look to strategies of how to continue working in this particular part of the city?

Robert Curvin 12:20

Well, again, another very long subject, but I'm

Cameraman 12:26

sorry to interrupt, but actually, the waiting just shifted thing are, your jacket is rubbing the mic. So maybe you just moved the mic up, like four inches or selling your tie? That should still be fine. Thanks.

Robert Curvin 12:39

Well, I think that the anti poverty program was very effective in many ways, in empowering local people providing an enormous amount of experience and resources to develop new leadership in the city. And without question, I think, along with the activities that were generated by the Civil Rights forces, it had a lot to do with making it possible for Newark, to perhaps move up in a way a few years and gain power for the black community, in the city the Black and Puerto Rican communities. I think the poverty program was decimated, partly because it was, had become so effective in that regard. It was raised, it was making it possible for local people to raise questions about their livelihood, the quality of life that they had, and the way they were being addressed by the larger forces around them. And so you, when you got when you get to the point historically, where the poverty program is most effective. You see,

Congress then immediately tried to take away the requirements for maximum feasible participation, giving voice to people. And then seriously cutting back on the amount of resources that were available to a point where ultimately the program is, is virtually wiped away. Even though a lot of very good things happened during that period.

Toni L Griffith, Harvard University 14:24

And a lot of that reaction by the federal government, it seemed from the video we watched was in part informed by local government. Reaction to that, who had not historically had any sort of a practical relationship. How do you feel like that given since the federal government sort of pulled out of that business, how do you feel like that dynamic has shaped itself over the last now 30 years or so in terms of civic leadership, civic engagement and this Newark's government's role in creating or not creating those types of relationships?

Robert Curvin 14:59

Well, I think that things changed. And, and I would not think that you could go back and undo the anti poverty approach. Again, certainly not the way it was at that time. But new forces emerge and new instruments emerge for change and development, community development corporations, for example, emerged at the end of that period. And, and today, I think that they are one of the important instruments of neighborhood improvement and stabilization throughout the city, not always as successful as their advocates would, would tell us. But on the whole, they are very, very important. instruments in city after city, around the country and helping neighborhoods really think about development, think about housing, and also serve directly the interests of people at the bottom, which, unfortunately, a lot of governments are not very good at serving by themselves. So in partnership, you can get a better result. If you're working with the community development corporation.

Toni L Griffith, Harvard University 16:16

Is there any advice that you'd give to local governments, and in particular, maybe planning agencies or economic development agencies on strengthening their relationships with CDCs and other community partners and doing effective work around poverty and urban redevelopment?

Robert Curvin 16:31

Well, I think communication is the first critical thing to understand that there has to be transparency and openness. And I, I'm really encouraged to see the extent to which you've tried to develop that in the city since you've been here. And I also think that having good information about what the realities are, and I just actually read the, the master plan, re-examination, and I, I'm impressed that, you know, there's a lot of good analysis. Frankly, I think some of the, the GPS stuff can go a little bit further in mixing populations, with services, for example, and facilities, you've done some of that, but I think that it can be really even refined and pushed deeper. But that kind of thing works. And it also helps to have a productive conversation with the people that are on the ground, in the community, like Ray, and his his colleagues who are, are actually doing the work. So and they can't do what they need to do without government support. So having that that partnership, is really very, very important. But I also think that if you asked me to dream about, you know, long run long range about cities, I think we have to find, we ultimately have to find a way to to figure out how you produce the kind of resource service rich, supplementary educational experience for poor kids that Geoffrey Canada is doing in New York. Now,

he's just doing it in a neighborhood. And he's having his difficulties too, with the economic downturn. But the reality is, is that the results are showing that you can get much broader, much deeper success when you really load up the system, and give these kids not only what everybody should expect, but they have to have more. And that's the challenge, I think, in our, in our community, that poverty is very pervasive in Newark. It's, it's not only a constant, you know, and it's not only a large number of close to a third of the population, but it's dispersed throughout very large areas of the city. And so if you really are going to approach that effectively, I think that you have to have a strategy that goes even beyond what we generally think about in terms of providing services and resources. Okay,

Toni L Griffith, Harvard University 19:38

I'm going to switch gears a little bit and just ask

Cameraman 19:40

Can I tell you one thing? It's natural to be mmhmm, mmmhmm but it sounds really bad on tape. So try not to make any noises.

Toni L Griffith, Harvard University 19:46

Okay.

Cameraman 19:50

You learn and you try to pass along to others.

George Hampton 19:55

You're like Carolyn Kennedy. You know, you know,

Toni L Griffith, Harvard University 20:03

Last couple questions, since the students aren't able to come here, I also want to try to give them a both humanistic and character portrait of this neighborhood. So first question is maybe if you can talk about or think about any special places or landmarks or just places that conjure up good memories for you, you know, what are some of the neighborhoods that have anchors or assets in the central ward that the students might want to know is important as a part of the identity of the neighborhood?

Robert Curvin 20:39

Well, I could Clem's tour through that area, which is very interesting, but the critical path is to go along either take Springfield Avenue, you know, straight up from from downtown, up to Irvington or, but then go north to south or south to north along what is now Irvine Turner Boulevard and talk about the the physical assets and the nature of the physical and social nature of the city that existed there 40, 50 years ago. It was extremely lively, exciting, interesting. Clubs, shops, recreational facilities, not you know, modern or whatnot. But you know, a lot of boxing going on. And the city Newark was a great place for, for the pugilist and we have different kinds of pugilists today. But it's there's it's a very interesting city, but also remind them of the way in which the city dealt with poverty. And that was to build these monstrous high rise buildings, which were not a bad thing in and of themselves. But they were so concentrated. That one official at one time said that Newark has created the most volatile, high rise ghetto on the eastern seaboard of the United States. And to some extent, he was correct, right,

within a radius of about three or four miles, there was a Hayes Homes, Stella Wright and the Scudder Homes, massive,

Toni L Griffith, Harvard University 22:38

What were roughly the street boundaries of that?

Robert Curvin 22:40

Well uh the Hayes homes were directly across the street, from the precinct, the Fourth Precinct where the disturbances began. The Stella Wright Homes were right across Irvine Turner Boulevard, like within eyesight, and then on Springfield Avenue, bordering Springfield Avenue were the Scudder Homes. And so you had you had a result, that was just the opposite of what people promised and what people thought. Now, I mean, to be fair, I think that it was the only vision that people had, I'm struck by Immerso's description of how the politicians thought about the building of Columbus Homes, that they actually sold it to the people, this is gonna be like a Gold Coast, but they were building awful housing. And it certainly turned out that way. But um, you know, physically, as well as socially Newark is a very different place today. And little of the Old Newark really exists in those two areas, certainly in the First Ward, it's gone. And it had to be changed. I mean, the housing was just totally gone. And that's true as a central ward, too. But then you also, the other thing to think about is the impact of the highway construction. I think that in some ways, and I don't, I don't have the numbers, I'd love to, you know, really track them down. But I think that there has been more dislocation from housing from highway construction than there was from, in fact as a result of the disturbances.

Toni L Griffith, Harvard University 24:42

And then my last question for you is, you know, it's interesting, you know, we talked about the Central ward. But then once you get beyond the central ward, a large part which is the central business district, people identify themselves in terms of neighborhoods and neighborhood names. Yeah, or even like Lincoln Park, which is in the central ward, but has a certain identity. And I'm just curious to see whether or not you have a sense of over the last 40 years if the residents who've kind of come in and out that pocket outside of the central business district in the central Ward, recog-, you know, do they identify themselves as being in a neighborhood? Or did they identify themselves with just being in Scudder Homes or Hayes Homes or any particular housing development? Is there a sense of neighborhood in this part of the city?

Robert Curvin 25:33

That's I really can't give you an answer that I would feel confident. I know that in my the area of the city that I live in, where I've lived for over 30 years. We talk about the neighborhood, and we do have a sense of neighborhood. But I don't know how, to what extent that really exists around the city, I think it would be hard to imagine that existing in areas of the central ward that are completely changed. Even you know, across the street from the Fourth Precinct there are no more housing projects, which is great. You have these Hope Six homes now. And that's a real improvement. But I don't know to what extent people have felt that there's enough of both the social history, the physical attachment that goes along with the meaning of neighborhood, as well as a sense of support and services that are available by the Hope Six project by the way, right across from the Fourth Precinct. If you stand there on the corner of Irvine Turner Blvd. and 17th Avenue, you can't see within eyeshot, a corner store, or a

laundromat or anything that people generally need. And so you have to say, Well, how could this really be a neighborhood? So there are some a lot of issues like that.

Toni L Griffith, Harvard University 27:13

That's a perfect way to stop and transition. Thank you so much. I appreciate it. So we're gonna switch - (Conversation)

28:55

We want the students to understand what neighborhood (distinctions?) mean? In terms of neighborhood boundaries political boundaries versus social associations? Those kinds of basic elements that you always think are entering (?)

George Hampton 29:51

(Unintelligable) to enable the community where you live, you interacted with. But at this point, where you live and your community my community where I shop, my community where I lived in -- (Cameraman questions). All right, 1-234-567-8910

Cameraman 30:24

Perfect, thank you.

Toni L Griffith, Harvard University 30:30

Okay, hello, Mr. Hampton. Hello. We can start the same way, if you can just sort of state your full name and tell us a little bit about your background and professional background and your relationship to Newark.

George Hampton 30:40

My name is George Hampton I was not born here. But at the same time, I am a product of Newark school system. All my schooling was here, including Rutgers University, this very building, as mentioned previously. So I graduated from Rutgers Newark. And my background is Urban Planning Urban Studies, and I'm a lover of the city and have used my background and experiences to promote the city. So I'm an optimist, and have always been and continue to be even at this, uh, date. I am retired from the University of Medicine and Dentistry where I was the vice president for Urban Planning and Community Relations for about 20 years. I've worked in state government as the executive assistant to the commissioner Department of Environmental Protection. Prior to that I was in city government under Newark Mayor Ken Gibson, I did urban planning Urban Studies, in fact, worked out of the Office of Newark studies. And also there's the urban coalition, I was a consultant to the urban coalition where I did affirmative action, Local Public Works studies, to determine what indeed happened with local public works money as which is pretty similar to what's about to happen again, now, where Obama is, group is content considering to do a stimulus package of significant proportions back then it was called Local Public Works. And I had to do an analysis of what actually happened to those funds. That's sort of a real quick version of it. Anyway,

Toni L Griffith, Harvard University 32:12

That's great. So you know, the students recently watched the War on Poverty, about Newark. And in your position, which I want to just even talk about, at some point, the fact that you were vice president of Urban Planning and Community Relations and the fact that those two are linked together, why don't you just talk about your (unintelligable) impressions of when you first came into that office, what the physical environment and social environment was like in terms of Community Relations, the university and what your mission was in that role?

George Hampton 32:53

Well, I came to the University of Medicine dentistry in 1980. And frankly, 20 years prior to that, there had been significant and had continued to be significant out migrations of of populations, particularly the middle class and upper middle classes from Newark, concentrating more and more therefore on poverty, the university and again, while on the one hand, I may talk to you about UMDNJ you, on the other I think it's appropriate and important to understand that I also in many ways, spearheaded projects for the four universities in Newark meaning UMDNJ Rutgers, this university here, Essex County College and... NJIT. Thank you, New Jersey Institute of Technology. Significant out migrations were occurring in the 80s when not only that, but on the periphery of all the campuses, including and especially UMDNJ, for a variety of reasons. Abandonment was happening everywhere, while the universities individually and collectively were planning to bring more monies back to this city. And indeed even as far back as 1980 I believe as much as \$1 billion of planned construction had been uh, considered by four universities not one. Immediately across the street, people were abandoning properties, vacancies were occurring everywhere and a few other things. So one of the first things that I did was wrote and I was the first one to write something that and I was the first one to write something like that for Newark. I mistakenly called used the words though masterplan, that was a mistake.

Toni L Griffith, Harvard University 34:37

Why was that a mistake?

George Hampton 34:38

Well, what I did was I wrote something called the University Heights master plan. The idea simply meant to take a look at all the out migration that had been occurring. Look at the land that was occurring back the. The boundaries incidentally, when I look at this map here, the boundaries basically were Springfield Avenue, Littleton Ave and/or 12th Street, depending on which argument you want me to give South Orange, not South Orange, Orange Street and University Avenue, that's basically a 1.6 square mile area. It's roughly about 700 acres of land, I forgot the exact numbers, so don't hold me to my numbers anymore. But even in 1980, that was right in the middle of the central Ward, there was no less than 125 to maybe 150 acres of vacant land. That means where, because of the, when you add up all the individual, city city lots and blocks, you find that there was about 140 to 150 acres of vacant land. So from that time, the first thing we did was we got the universities to collectively get together and work together. So all four universities and their presidents, if you will begin to meet on a routine basis. And in the process of meeting on a routine basis, they begin to plan, if you will for the entire area. Now, there was a lot of cooperative planning being done. I mean, but there was also a lot of politics about whether or not there was indeed, that cooperation. So yes, you could ask me many, I could go off into

Toni L Griffith, Harvard University 36:16

Were there any community partners, in the process of doing this plan with in addition to the other four institutions?

George Hampton 36:23

The answer is is yes. What was now - there are issues with all of this. And believe me, this is not enough time to go through it all. But the answer is yes and no. First and foremost, the very first time. The answer is yes. And no. First and foremost, if you wanted to look at it from the very first time the universities got together, somebody had to conceptualize what should indeed happen. Now, prior to this, now, the suspicions of the university, let's go into that for a second. The suspicions and appropriateness for the for the communities to complain and be concerned about this area is appropriate. Again, UMDNJ alone, and you wanted to ask me some questions about that. Back in the early. Well, mid 60s, when UMDNJ was first to come to Newark, there were plans by which it was to take up 150 acres sitting right in the center of the city. This was under then Mayor Hugh Addonizio, who ultimately ended up being indicted and convicted of corruption. So now because of it between what the university had planned back in the 60s between what the state had planned, as you know, back in those days, the concept of urban renewal meant urban removal. And because of what the state had planned with, with two particular carters meaning the what I'd still call Belmont Avenue Irvine Turner, I guess, the term today and also uh, Bergen Street two corridors were supposed to be built, limited access highways, were supposed to connect literally the northern, new corridors which were seven, which was like 280. With the new card on the southern end of the city, which was, uh, route 78. They were supposed to be two other corridors connecting those two, and they two were going to be limited access highways, which meant as Bob had indicated and others significant displacement of its residents. So the community has all kinds of reasons to be concerned. And their suspicions, even to this day have never stopped, quite frankly, when it came to UMDNJ alone 150 acres sitting in the middle of the of the city was phenomenal. If you look back at the actual blocks that had been planned during the Addonizio administration, just for UMDNJ. It was it was 14 city blocks. Now the interesting thing about those 14 city blocks was people lived there. There was it was comprised primarily of three storey tenements, and then on every single block people live there, I'm using the word people, I should perhaps add the word poor or or people who had limited voices or or within the within the city. And so because of that, a few things happen because of uprisings and incidentally, you should also know that I at the age of 19 and (?) 17. When Mr. Curvin and others had started CORE and a couple other things within the city. We picketed against UMDNJ coming the University of Medicine dentistry coming, so I picketed around when I was like 18 saying "Hell no. They shouldn't come to Newark." On the other hand, I had no idea that you add well 18, 10, 12 years later later, I was going to end up ultimately well, about 13 years later end up actually being Vice President at that university and continued it for quite some time. But anyway, so that 150 acres for UMDNJ alone, ultimately was shrunk down to about 50 acres. And to this day UMDNJ comprises about 50 acres sitting in the middle of the city. Now, the question was asked before about whether or not indeed, the community was involved in any of this? And the answer is yes, and no, as I had indicated, and I said, I say that because there was tremendous politics occurring on the one hand. I think it was clearly a learning process for everyone, but the carving out if you will, or the design of University Heights, calling it that, and then having four universities collectively work with the community. And I can explain how on a variety of initiatives has been what I would consider probably one of the best kept secrets, if you will, in the country, when it comes to collaborative planning, by all people involved. One of the problems that I see with urban, and I'm giving

you just my-, incidentally, I taught urban planning here at UMD- at Rutgers, three credit courses here, I taught it in New Brunswick and I'm also was on the faculty at UMDNJ School of Public Health as a sidebar. But the point is one of the things that people have a tendency of assuming is that in poor cities, especially that the response or the responsibility for its rejuvenation, is the city government's problem. And unfortunately, people have a tendency of assuming it's the city governments alone. I'm of the opinion that no one entity, not government, not the business community, not the universities, not the hospitals, not the social service agencies, not the community development agencies alone, will ever dramatically change and affect what's been occurring in cities. But on the other hand, through what I would call a collaborative initiative, if people could at least get on the same page, when it comes to making some general decisions about what should happen into a city, and be willing to sacrifice and that's always a problem. But be willing to sac- be willing to give up some of their own demands, if you will, for immediacy, I'm also referring to the universities, and others giving up their demands for immediacy, then I think cities can indeed do a great deal more. So I could go into individual projects of University Heights, I could talk to you about Science Park, I could talk to you about the Science Park High School, I could talk to you about University Heights, and how the the University Heights and all of those things were created. I don't know how much time you got. But the bottom line is collectively because of the universities primarily working with the community and others. These initiatives were done more were happening through what's called CHEN for University created an organization called Council for Higher Education in Newark, of which I was a spearhead, one of the background leading people who are constantly making changes happen that to this day, have improved these neighborhoods and other areas and a lot of areas non which one would not typically assume that universities would be responsible, for example, housing. If you drive along Littleton Avenue, you'll see the very first townhouses that were built in these neighborhoods. And it's called the Upper University Heights development or something, Upper University Heights neighborhood, something like that, along Littleton Avenue, those 66 units of housing were built primarily by, if you will, a collaboration of the universities along with community based organizations at that time, that community organization was called the University Heights Coalition, that 66 housing units of housing were built by them. That was the first that had happened in the city. There were a series of things that happened with that housing. And again, at a later time, we'd give you the detail as to why that project was indeed successful. But the bottom line is housing that was built that cost at that time, about \$70,000 per unit to be built, were sold, if you will, to North residents at \$33,000 and \$50,000. At 53,000, I think was the absolute maximum price today those houses are worth \$175,000, 200,000, depending on which ones we're talking about. But that's one small example. Go ahead, ask me questions.

Toni L Griffith, Harvard University 44:52

(back to you?) on that. And then just want to go back to something you mentioned, which was you said sort of the University Heights neighborhood was ultimately sort of carved out. Right? Can you generally give me the boundaries of that?

George Hampton 45:04

Yes. Springfield Avenue. I'll say Littleton avenue for a reason. Orange Street and Washington Street. We've debated about University Avenue and Washington streets.

Toni L Griffith, Harvard University 45:17

So it's roughly the boundaries of that master plan. And quote, unquote, boundaries.

George Hampton 45:23

Yeah, the very first time I drew the map it included 12th Street. But because of what I would call politics, meaning that the the city council and others used to pick it and complain and said, "How dare you down at the universities are threatening to displace everybody", because between Littleton Avenue and 12th street, there were a great deal, there was more housing there than any other keep in mind, the other parts of the of the neighborhood, I refer to them as 150 acres of vacant land. But on that port between Littleton Avenue and going up toward 12th, there was more, there was less vacancy, and more.

Toni L Griffith, Harvard University 46:05

And so that was ultimately excluded from

George Hampton 46:07

So we cut it out, because it just was less confusing, because some politicians were using that as a reason to, you know, Not over my dead body, will they ever do anything in this city. But yeah.

Toni L Griffith, Harvard University 46:18

So given the legacy, the the concerns that residents had about eminent domains and taking, be it for the medical campus or universities, the reaction at that time was anybody other than us wanting to carve a boundary around us was bad? So people will stave that off. So you're the new neighborhood, if you will, that ended up being created was really out of lands that had already been abandoned, predominantly, as well as the campus, the medical campus and some of the colleges themselves?

George Hampton 46:48

Well, yes, and no, I mean, again, if you go back- incidentally, I'm a bit...I'm a very ambivalent type of person, you'll see that like I'm schizophrenic all the time.

Toni L Griffith, Harvard University 46:57

It doesn't appear that way yet. You haven't come across that way.

George Hampton 46:59

There's reason for my schizophrenia. Nonetheless, if you go back far enough in history, then one could argue that the reason why there was so much vacant land and there was all it is because of the universities. Okay, and especially UMDNJ. So if you go back into the 60s, and again, Springfield Avenue being where the Riots had occurred (?) and all that, there are those who have argued that one of the reasons the riots happened in Newark was because of UMDNJ. I'm talking specifically about that particular university. Now, but if you go into the 80s, again, enter the Council on Higher Education in Newark, enter the University Heights so called masterplan, then, yes, it was primarily about taking a look at all the vacant land that was occurring, recognizing that indeed, land was cheap, exceptionally cheap, not not only has not I'm not trying to say that as as as a method of trying to exploit it. I'm just saying, How can a place when you just deal with with economics? How can how can there be sitting in the very center of a city, even then some, you know, 300,000 population, and the arguments are 225, up to 300. But let's just say 250, okay, for the sake of the argument. 250,000 people. How could land

be so cheap sitting in the middle of it? How could there be so many, if you will, a downtown, which is only you know, adjacent to this area? How could it be a downtown? How could it be downtown with a critical mass with an economy that's down there like that? I don't know. I no longer have the numbers. I studied all this back and during my youth, but the point was the downtown, Newark's downtown, and it's and it's University populations had the highest salary populations in the state. So how could there be people with so much money being here, and you literally walk 50 feet away, and abandonment is occurring with such you know, rapidness, if that's the correct word, so it will always amaze me. But so yeah, it was a lot of cheap land and the land was available in a variety of ways. Now, the universities never owned that land. And the universities recognized that working with the city, what you had to do is market the land, you had to encourage others to invest in this city. And that's what took place. We encourage others to invest. So one sort of last set of questions. So was the university or CHEN on that collaboration directly involved in the development of Society Hill? You know what the answers gonna be yes and no. In the original master plan, in the original master plan, we laid out the city, University Heights, and we laid out an area called the interstitial space, and that interstitial space was indeed where now Hovnanian (?) Society Hill is now located. And we had laid that out as a place by which housing should be. And we had argued that housing should be, which ultimately happened, I might add, for both it's the university families, because people were not mark--. It makes no sense to me, again, I'm giving you urban planning, urban economics, it just makes no sense for to have these kinds of populations so close to each other, and yet not have appropriate marketing, which encourages people to want to live in the neighborhoods immediately in the peripheral neighborhood.

Toni L Griffith, Harvard University 50:37

And so what was the driver of that, realizing that development, or that community?

George Hampton 50:43

I think, well, what ultimately happened was the city, we used to have to take the city by the hand. All right now I'm just telling you like it is, and just accept the fact that people would attack and fight and complain and call us names throughout the whole list of this. And to this day, there are issues and I could go on both sides, all these issues and tell until you decided the issue. But nonetheless, we would take the city by the hand, meaning collectively, the universities would go downtown and explain all this to the city government, watch them fight with us, complain. And it was an amazing thing, because people had to learn and understand politics, I think, for Newark, especially but other places as well. It's a shame, but you got to understand politics. So we would have coun- council people, particularly council, people who were in charge of the Central Ward, tell us in private, look, we love what you're doing. We want these things to happen. But when you come down here at the city council meeting, we're gonna beat you up, everything is gonna pass, it's all going to get passed. But we gonna beat you up because our constituency wants to hear us complain, and so forth, and so on. And in many ways, that's what happened. But there's, there's more to it than that. I mean, there, there's positive things, there's negative things, I'm telling you, the positive side, primarily because I think that side needs to be heard. It's very easy for me to tell you, you know, how terrible these universities have done, and how much of a bad job they've done in tons of different ways. But even to this day, some of the things that were set in place, did indeed start happening. There are other neighborhoods were carved out within the neighborhoods. So there's a neighborhood called Science Park, I was the executive director, acting Director of the Science Park project twice, the first time around was and that's a 40 acre site within

University Heights. And the idea was to attract technologies to the city. The purpose of attracting technologies to the city and other forms of businesses was, of course to create an economy back into the city. And in some ways, it's been effective in other ways it has not. That's one example. The Science Park High School was another thing that the universities got together and tried to do. First, we tried to do it with frankly, without Newark government, not Newark city government, Newark Board of Education, because when the Newark Board of Education heard that the universities wanted to have their Science Park High School, and they wanted to create a high school that in our opinion would be so good that the University family as well as Newark residents would be allowed to bring their students to it because it would be connected with the four universities. Where is there a place in the country where where a high school has has the is contiguous to and connected structurally to four universities nowhere in the country to my knowledge, we went around looking for it anyway. But when it first we first proposed that, we got beat up by the - we the universities got beat up by the Newark Board of Education. How dare you talk about bringing you know again, it was the same kind of arguments but the point is the number one thing that that then Board of Education was concerned about was they were very angry at NJIT because NJIT had built a rec- a recreational center and had taken some land they hadn't taken land, they had taken their land, land owned by NJIT and had created a soccer field, like a soccer field. Well, the biggest concern that the Newark Board of Education had at that time was, why can't Newark students use NJIT's soccer field. And NJIT was like, well you know, we're trying to build it, you know, so that we can get to use it first. But anyway, that was another story. But my point is we're trying to build a high school. That was the issue was the soccer field. Ultimately, we tried even to do our own high school. I'm sitting I'm lost for words. Charter school, because the charter school we went and lobbied for, if you will, and helped create charter school legislation. And after we did that we didn't try to create our own charter school. But by then things were softening with the Board of Ed. And we ultimately agreed that there should be one high school in Newark that would be a Science Park High School. And that would combine the existing Science High School with this concept of working with the four universities and today, there is now a Science Park High School in the city. Good.

Toni L Griffith, Harvard University 55:13

So I think you've given us a very good example of a different type of community partner and the role that they played in community improvisation. I think I'm gonna take a break now and let us go to Ray and kind of give us a third perspective from the community corporations point of view. Thank you very much.

George Hampton 55:29

I enjoyed it.

Robert Curvin 55:31

Toni, you asked who started Society Hill?

George Hampton 55:38

Don Harris.

Robert Curvin 55:39

It was actually started by a block developer Don Harris who was then bought out by Halani (?).

George Hampton 55:49

Yes, yes.

Toni L Griffith, Harvard University 55:53

It was part of urban renewal?

George Hampton 55:58

Yeah, he had, in fact, Don Harris was, was actually an a_____. We used to joke that all time. I sold a concept called University Heights from Don Harris, because Don Harris had called it neighborhoods of the university. Yeah. Yeah, so I turned around. He's sick, got very sick. He's still around. He's still hanging. He's he communicates with Gus Heningburg. But he's very sick.

Robert Curvin 56:27

(Conversation) Well, one of the interesting things is the model cities and HEW and HUD secretary. After the riot, then rebellion, wrote to the state and said, you can't have the \$35 million for developers, unless you reach agreements with the community. You have to address these address these 1234 I think there were seven and the letters that included even the construction educational opportunities, programs, etc, etc. Right.

Unknown male 57:24

And as a footnote to that, at the first meeting of the new president of the hospital, he says it doesn't exist anymore.

Robert Curvin 57:35

This Oh, what do you mean? Well, yeah, he was told he was told to say that.

Unknown male 57:42

At his first meeting his first public meeting. And no one has raised their hands yet. Nobody challenged it publicly.

Robert Curvin 57:57

The reality is that (unintelligible) impact on...

George Hampton 58:04

To this day.

Robert Curvin 58:05

To this day. And one could argue that a lot of them have been negated or-